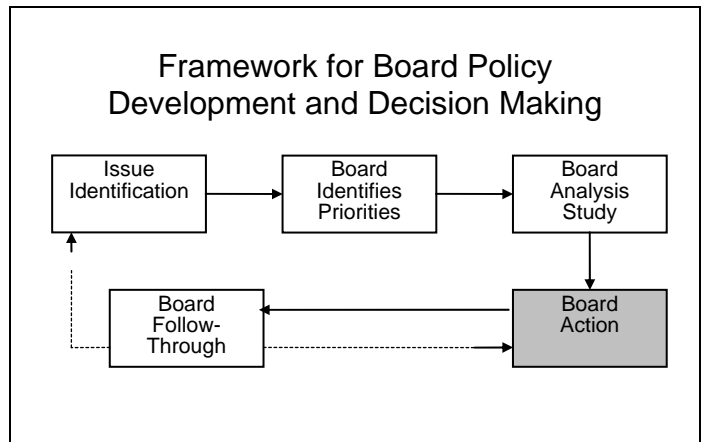


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary July 31, 2008



Agenda Item:	Northeast Iowa Community College Accreditation Report
Iowa Goal:	3. Individuals will pursue postsecondary education in order to drive economic success.
Equity Impact Statement:	Northeast Iowa Community College supports an open-door policy in enrollment of all students.
Presenters:	Colleen Hunt, Consultant Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation
Attachments:	1
Recommendation:	The Department of Education recommends continued accreditation for Northeast Iowa Community College through 2014-2015. A State Interim Accreditation visit will be held in 2011-2012.
Background:	<p>This is a report of the evaluation of Northeast Iowa Community College for continued state accreditation as an associate degree-granting institution. The Iowa Department of Education conducted the evaluation visit on April 21-23, 2008. The findings reflect the work of the accreditation team in the comprehensive review of Northeast Iowa Community College.</p> <p>Northeast Iowa Community College is following the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) model for accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission, a commission of the North Central Association (NCA). With AQIP, an institution demonstrates it meets accreditation standards and expectations through sequences of events that align with those ongoing activities that characterize organizations striving to improve their performance.</p>

Accreditation Evaluation

Northeast Iowa Community College

**On-Site Visit Conducted
April 21-23, 2008**

Iowa Department of Education

STATE OF IOWA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

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**Accreditation Team Members
Northeast Iowa Community College
Accreditation Visit
April 21-23, 2008**

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Northeast Iowa Community College's State Accreditation Conducted April 21-23, 2008

Purpose of the Visit:

The purpose of the visit was an accreditation of Northeast Community College (NICC) by the Iowa Department of Education.

Organizational Context:

Thousands of people have chosen NICC as their place to prepare for careers since 1966, when the Iowa State Board of Education officially approved the formation of the Area One Vocational-Technical School district, with Calmar as its administrative headquarters. The merged area included the public school districts in Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties and sections of Bremer, Buchanan, and Mitchell counties. In 1970, the merged area was enlarged to include public school districts in Dubuque and Delaware counties and sections of Jones and Jackson counties.

Career education programs were offered for the first time in 1967 with 170 students enrolled in 12 programs. Construction of classroom facilities began in 1967 on the 210-acre campus on the south edge of Calmar. The Calmar Campus now includes seven buildings: Darwin L. Schrage Administration, Max Clark Hall, Wilder Learning Resource Center, Industrial Technologies, Student Union, Farm Implement/Welding, and the newly completed Northeast Iowa Community-based Dairy Center. This \$4.1 million dairy education center and applied research laboratory is part of the state's effort to promote value-added agriculture.

Career and adult education programs began in Dubuque in 1971, in what is now Cycare Plaza, as well as several other locations scattered throughout the city. A new campus was started in 1979 at Peosta, where most services are located in one building. The addition of the Burton Payne Library was completed in 1982. Today, this library houses nearly 14,000 books, periodicals and audiovisual titles. In 1993, courses began to be offered at the Dubuque Center, catering to students working downtown. In 1997, the college formed a partnership with the National Safety Council to construct and operate the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS), opening a national training center dedicated to lowering the level of accidents in agriculture.

NICC became a community college in 1988 and is authorized by the Iowa State Board of Education to award the Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, and Associate in Applied Science degrees as well as diplomas. In addition to these credit programs, NICC provides continuing education throughout the district and

assists with a variety of economic development activities. Nearly 5,000 students are currently enrolled at NICC.

Sites or Branch Campuses/Centers Reviewed:

Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) Calmar and Peosta campuses, Town Clock Center, Dubuque Center, and Waukon Center.

Interactions with Institutional Constituencies:

1. Cabinet
2. President
3. Chief Academic Officer
4. Academic Deans/Provosts
5. College Senate
6. Dean and Associate Dean of Student Services
7. Directors
8. Dubuque Center and GED/ELL Directors and Faculty
9. Students
10. AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) Liaison
11. Quality Council/AQIP Strategy Team
12. Distance Learning Staff and Faculty
13. Career and Technical Faculty
14. Vice Presidents and Directors
15. Arts and Sciences Faculty
16. Continuing Education and Workforce Development Directors and Faculty
17. Institutional Researcher
18. Equity Staff/Diversity Committees
19. Student Services Professional Staff
20. Staff and Faculty Development Committees
21. Board of Trustees
22. Human Resources Staff
23. High School Program and Tech Prep Staff, Career Connections Staff
24. Advisory Committees
25. Support Staff
26. Library Directors and Staff
27. Learning/Testing Center and Disabilities Directors/Faculty
28. Curriculum Committee
29. Quality Faculty Plan Committee

Principal Documents, Materials, and Web Pages Reviewed:

1. Web Site: nicc.edu
2. Board Policies
3. Board of Trustees Minutes
4. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program Review Process
5. Current CTE Program Review Schedule
6. CTE Program Evaluation Procedure
7. Program Evaluations 2007-2008
8. Electronic Technology Program Viability Study 2006
9. Articulation Agreements—High School and Postsecondary
10. AQIP Documentation—Current AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) Action Projects
11. AQIP 2008 Systems Portfolio
12. AQIP Strategy Team Minutes
13. Current AQIP Action Projects
14. Retired AQIP Action Projects
15. Plans for Bond Funds
16. Workforce Development 260E report
17. “Opportunities” Continuing Education Schedule
18. Professional Staff Meeting Minutes
19. Vision 7 (V7) Physical Plant and Equipment Requests
20. V7 Strategic QI Initiatives
21. Examples of Data Driven Decisions
22. Emergency Management Team Minutes
23. Systems Appraisal Feedback Report from 2006 Portfolio
24. Campus Security Reports
25. Making Visions Reality Documents
26. Organizational Chart
27. Student Planner
28. Faculty Handbook
29. Documentation of Strategies to Recruit, Enroll, Retain, and Successfully Serve Students in Nontraditional Careers, Students From Under-represented Racial/ethnic Groups, English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Other Nontraditional Students
30. EEO/AA Documentation
31. Educational Master Plan and Statement on General Education
32. College Catalog
33. Alumni/Graduate Follow-up Reports
34. Credit Course Schedules
35. Student and District Demographic Information
36. Strategic Plan
37. Teacher Load Information
38. Faculty Personnel Files
39. Quality Faculty Plan
40. Quality Faculty Plan Committee Agendas and Minutes

41. AS28s
42. Marketing Publications
43. Perkins Report
44. ACT Summary Report
45. CCSSE and CCSFE Summary 2006
46. Clarus Report Summary
47. NCCBP Report
48. Advisory Committee Minutes
49. Collective Bargaining Agreement-Support staff Association
50. Collective Bargaining Agreement-Higher Education Association
51. Foundation Annual Report
52. Alumni Hall of Fame
53. Support Staff Development
54. Xpress Committee Minutes
55. On-line Committee Meeting Minutes
56. Strategic Enrollment Management minutes
57. Past-Professional Development Opportunities
58. All-College Day Information
59. Peosta and Calmar Campus Council Minutes
60. Strategic Enrollment Management Minutes
61. Student Senate Constitution and Minutes
62. College Senate Minutes
63. Curriculum Committee Minutes
64. Quality Council Minutes
65. Deans Meetings Minutes and Agendas
66. On-line Handbook and Instructor Success, and On-line Committee Minutes
67. Tech Prep Information
68. Payne Library and Wilder Learning Resource Center Mission/Vision Document
69. Employee Handbook
70. Business Services Procedural Manual
71. President's Cabinet Minutes
72. Diversity Committee Minutes
73. High School Relations Information

Additional State Review Requirements:

- ✓ The Quality Faculty Plan (QFP), as required by Iowa Code, was reviewed at Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) and was found to meet the stated requirements of the Iowa Code. Interviewees indicated that the mentoring program as described in the QFP was being initiated. The QFP Committee reported that the committee had recently been re-activated.

- ✓ Review of faculty personnel files, as required by Iowa Code, did not present any issues.
- ✓ The review of faculty load, as required by Iowa Code, exhibited evidence of Career and Technical Education (CTE) as well as arts and sciences faculty who were exceeding the full-time teaching load as specified in Iowa Code. The college should examine their policies and procedures in order to assure that all faculty members comply with the teaching loads as specified in Iowa Code.
- ✓ The Iowa Code requirement of reviewing 20 percent of CTE programs per year is being followed.

Adequacy of Progress in Addressing Previous Accreditation Visit:

- The college may wish to study and review the delivery of developmental education from within one department rather than through the coordination by content area.

Met, no action needs to be taken.

- The college is encouraged to identify quiet areas for students to study and have group activity.

Met, no action needs to be taken. The college is continuing to work on this issue and continued efforts will be made as space is repurposed as a result of the passage of the bond referendum. Several quiet areas were observed throughout the visit.

- With the implementation of the on-campus Agriculture Safety Center which will bring international visitors, the college is encouraged to explore processes so as to address cultural expectations.

Met, no action needs to be taken.

- The Arts and Sciences enrollments could be strengthened and enhanced by reviewing the structure of the college catalog so as to break out or differentiate between and among the vocational-technical and arts and sciences course offerings. Likewise, more emphasis could be placed on the paraprofessional offerings.

Met, no action needs to be taken.

- Consideration should be taken by the institution as new sites/centers are developed that adequate planning take place to assure that appropriate services are accessible to students in attendance.

Met, no action needs to be taken.

- The college is encouraged to develop and implement a marketing plan, which encompasses all processes including admissions. The recruitment and marketing plan for the institution should be coordinated.

Met, no action needs to be taken.

- As capital funds become available, the institution should explore the feasibility of expanding the library/learning resource space.

Met, no action is needed. The library/learning resource space is an anticipated project due to the passage of the recent bond referendum.

- With the needs to upgrade the equipment in vocational/technical and liberal arts areas, the Board of Trustees and Administration should aggressively pursue the passing of the six-cent levy. These funds are critical for program maintenance.

Met, no action needs to be taken as this levy was passed after the previous visit. This is a vital source of funds for the college and will again be up for a vote.

1. HELPING STUDENTS LEARN

Category one identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional analysis. This criterion focuses on the teaching-learning processes within a formal instructional context, yet also addresses how the entire organization contributes to student learning and overall student development. It examines processes and systems related to: learning objectives; mission-driven student learning and development; intellectual climate; academic programs and courses; student preparation; key issues such as technology and diversity; faculty and staff roles; teaching and learning effectiveness; course sequencing and scheduling; learning and co-curricular support; student assessment; measures; analysis of results; and improvement efforts.

Strengths:

- ✓ Interviewees from all groups indicated that the staff and faculty are dedicated to student success and follow the mission of the college to provide accessible, affordable, quality education and training to meet the needs of the communities. Multiple interviewees indicated that the faculty, staff, and administration are the strength of the college.
- ✓ The distance learning program is being guided by sound practices and is documenting its successes. The online committee has developed policies regarding course standards, instructor training, and student abilities.
- ✓ The assessment of career and technical programs is evident and thorough. For example, program reviews include classroom assessment activities, exit competencies, and areas for improvement.
- ✓ Articulation and partnerships with four-year colleges, universities, and secondary schools is evident. Articulation examples include agreements with 24 high schools and colleges such as Loras, Upper Iowa University, University of Dubuque, and Iowa Regents Universities. Concurrent enrollment and Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) courses are being offered to students in the local high schools in the community college district.
- ✓ Pride and quality is evident in programs and services including those such as the National Education Council on Agricultural Safety (NECAS); the Child Development Center; the Dairy, John Deere, Automotive, and Agriculture Mechanics programs; and the Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) national

advisor award. The college offers unique programs such as the NECAS, Entrepreneurial Cosmetology (an anticipated program), and the Dairy program.

- ✓ Communication to credit students regarding both course and college expectations is evident. Examples include providing students with the 12 common learning objectives, individual course objectives, prerequisites, placement scores, program and degree expectations, and student code of conduct.
- ✓ Follow-up studies of graduates provide placement data for career and technical programs. A 98 percent response rate was achieved. Placement of students in career and technical programs in employment and continuing education was reported to be 92 percent.
- ✓ Interviewees indicated that the college advisory committees were committed to program and college success. The committee members expressed that they understood their purpose and focus as it related to student needs and programming including items such as curricular currency and job placement. The Peosta campus advisory committee also exhibited a strong understanding of the AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) process and its role in strategic planning.
- ✓ The Xpress Student Portal (Campuscruiser) allows for 24/7 access to a variety of student services functions (e.g. registration, grades, financial aid, account information).
- ✓ The college has hired a Director of Student Life at Peosta and assistant at Calmar to focus on student life issues. This focus on student life issues is accomplished in addition to providing activities and entertainment for students.
- ✓ A student development budget helps support student organizations, which enables students to attend events at both the state and national level.
- ✓ The creation of district-wide deans has provided an opportunity for focus on curriculum and tying the campuses together to ensure the one campus-one voice concept. Supervision of faculty by the district-wide deans helps to focus on this concept.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ Interviewees representing the library, continuing education, and advisory board recommended that there be a continued focus on consistent

academic programming throughout the district such as the AA degree, syllabus, program offerings, and available services.

- ✓ A review of the manner in which online and secondary credit growth impacts other service areas of the college such as the library, technology needs, and outlying centers is suggested. Interviewees stated that as online credit grows and more high school students are enrolled in courses, fewer students are coming into the library. Therefore, these students may need more online resources.
- ✓ An AQIP project on developing an overall assessment plan may be a good use of resources. The expertise from other colleges and professional conferences may be utilized to gain insight into a plan that is both comprehensive and which meets NICC needs. Tying this assessment plan to department and program assessment outcomes and measurements of Arts and Sciences student success is a needed step. Developing a method to assess the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes could also be a part of the plan. Communicating targets is important as well. In addition, continuing education assessments should align with the overall plan.
- ✓ The downtown Dubuque Center could be a growth area on credit side of the college. Marketing, budgeting, and strategy could enable this to occur. By building bridges through a less threatening noncredit pathway into Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) credit programs, as has been done in Certified Nurse Aide (CNA) and other technical areas, nontraditional students could also be a growth area. Interviewees of the center expressed the desire to have knowledge of the budget for the center.
- ✓ Multiple interview groups including the advisory committee indicated that an AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) project examining the preparation of incoming students in the areas of math, reading, and writing would be beneficial.
- ✓ The college may want to study additional ways to offer programs to nontraditional populations at the main campuses and centers such as online, evening, hybrid, or weekend options. Additional career and technical course offerings on a part-time evening basis to meet the needs of the community might also be considered.
- ✓ Interviewees indicated a need to address the lack of a written plan to address a systemic approach to diversity. Consider providing professional development for the college-wide diversity committee to enable them to devise strategies to advance this issue. Consider utilizing this as a future

AQIP action project. Involving some of the diverse population of the area in advisory and other committees could provide ideas to increase diversity.

- ✓ Several interview groups, including students and advisory committee members, indicated a strong need to upgrade software such as the Office Suite to industry standards to ensure graduate success and employability.
- ✓ Although the Career and Technical and Arts and Sciences faculty have informal collaboration on topics such as the integration of academics and the general education core in the Career and Technical programs, the visiting team suggests this be made into a college-wide formalized effort.
- ✓ Interviewees indicated that course time periods overlap, which hampers students' efforts to put together concise course schedules. A scheduling committee might be utilized to look at a more efficient structure of offerings to maximize student registrations.

2. ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES

Category two addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of the major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of the mission. Depending on the organization's character, the category examines processes and systems related to: identification of other distinctive objectives; alignment of other distinctive objectives; faculty and staff roles; assessment and review of objectives; measures; analysis of results; and improvement efforts.

Strengths:

- ✓ Interviewees indicated that Vision 7 (V7) is contributing to a better understanding of the College's Strategic Planning initiatives, especially at administrative levels and the Peosta campus.
- ✓ Interviewees indicated that there has been an increased effort to gather feedback from students for future planning. An example provided was that a student representative serves on the College Senate and provides a voice for students.
- ✓ Interviewees stated that the recent "All College Day" provided opportunities for various disciplines and departments to evaluate how areas are assessed to determine needs for improvement. It was reported that all attendees focused on an important issue of the day. Retention and nontraditional and adult learners were the focus of previous "All College Days."
- ✓ Interviewees indicated that partnerships aid the programming and support of student learning. The college establishes and maintains partnerships such as the dairy barn, foundation, workforce development office, and practicum and internship sites.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ Interviewees recommended that attention be given to ensure that all levels of staff are part of the planning process and have equal opportunity for input and a channel in which to convey their concerns and ideas.
- ✓ Due to the reorganization of the college, several interviewees stated that there may be a lack of representation of some areas of the college on committees, which might lead to inequitable representation. In addition, interviewees expressed that it is difficult to find available times for all to meet. Interviewees expressed confusion regarding the committee that was previously entitled "Meet and Confer." A concern was that with the reorganization, that the original purpose of the committee may not be met.

- ✓ Advisory committee minutes were provided to the visiting team for a variety of academic subject areas. However, the business area was the only one in which a full list of committee members was provided. Therefore, the visiting team could not make a determination that committee members are balanced regarding gender and representation. The college should review advisory committee membership to ensure that the committee members are balanced in that regard.

3. UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS' NEEDS

Category three examines how the organization works actively to understand student and other stakeholder needs. It examines processes and systems related to: student and stakeholder identification; student and stakeholder requirements; analysis of student and stakeholder needs; relationship building with students and stakeholders; complaint collection, analysis; and resolution; determining satisfaction of students and stakeholders; measures; analysis of results; and improvement efforts.

Strengths:

- ✓ Interviewees reported that the college is beginning to provide structured learning communities for students at both campuses. These communities are for small groups of students, who study together with peer mentors, and participate in out-of class social and extended learning activities that connect with faculty and staff.
- ✓ NICC (Northeast Iowa Community College) surveyed students in 2006 and again in 2008 utilizing the Community College Survey of Student Engagement to gain insight into a variety of student issues.
- ✓ The college has a variety of active program advisory committees which assist with issues to ensure that programs offered by the college are up-to-date and vital.
- ✓ The college implemented the Institutional Research Director to support and prioritize the initiatives across the district. This position gathers information on CCSSE and the National Community College Benchmarking Project to provide to personnel at the college. This information should be of assistance with the two action projects on retention and assessment.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ The college needs to ensure consistency across campuses regarding the advisory boards' knowledge, information shared, and training opportunities. To ensure the one voice concept, perhaps a shared/joint meeting of the boards from both campuses might be accomplished. It is suggested that information regarding AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) be presented to the Calmar advisory boards in order to get more involvement in AQIP from that campus. The visiting team encourages the college to continue to work on comparable curriculum among programs across the district.

- ✓ The college is encouraged to continue to focus on online and hybrid course growth opportunities by allocating more resources and staffing. Interviewees stated that these classes appear to fill rapidly. The newly-established distance learning director might help to focus these efforts.
- ✓ Interviewees expressed a concern for student safety and sufficient travel time between the Dairy Foundation program and the main Calmar campus. A path/walkway connection might allow more students to use state of the art equipment—e.g. Nursing and Dental students in the dairy lab.
- ✓ The new shared governance plan with the College Senate provides an opportunity for buy-in on college-wide decisions. Discussions on whether the senate has equitable representation across the district should be explored.

4. VALUING PEOPLE

Category four explores commitment to the development of faculty, staff, and administrators, since the efforts of all are required for success. It examines processes and systems related to: work and job environment; workforce needs; training initiatives; job competencies, and characteristics; recruitment, hiring, and retention practices; work processes and activities; training development; personnel evaluation; recognition, reward, compensation, and benefits; motivation factors; satisfaction, health and safety, and well-being; measures; analysis of results; and improvement efforts.

Strengths:

- ✓ Multiple interviewees stated that the college provides internal tuition waivers for staff and faculty on both credit and noncredit courses if it relates to their jobs.
- ✓ Documents indicated that the college has a 100 percent pass rate on GED testing.
- ✓ Interviewees stated that employees value and respect one another.
- ✓ The college offers child care centers at both campuses which is an asset for staff, students, and community, which indicates commitment to meeting employee needs.
- ✓ It was observed that staff takes pride in their campus.
- ✓ The college offers a wellness program.
- ✓ The college recognizes an employee annually for quality.
- ✓ Interviewees reported that the college has an emphasis on growing their own leaders through a college succession plan. Leadership opportunities are provided for employees through the committee structure.
- ✓ Organization memberships for staff are provided by the college as well as support for them to participate in state and national leadership opportunities.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ Although the college has an annual employee recognition award, consider implementing recognition of staff and non-faculty personnel. Interview groups indicated that the annual employee recognition award generally is given to a faculty member. By specifically recognizing staff and non-

faculty personnel in addition, it may accomplish the communication of successes of more internal staff members across the district.

- ✓ Multiple interview groups stated very little funds are available for professional development through the professional development fund. It was stated that funds have been depleted by January. Consider setting up a plan to prioritize needs rather than using a first-come, first-serve basis. Consider establishing an academic professional development plan to increase and distribute funds for faculty and staff development.
- ✓ Consider establishing a method or process to gauge employee satisfaction. Examples might include AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Program) Examiner, a Constellation study, or PACE.

5. LEADING AND COMMUNICATING

Category five addresses how the leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide the organization in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. It examines processes and systems related to: leading activities; communicating activities; alignment of leadership system practices; institutional values and expectations; direction setting; future opportunity seeking; decision making; use of data; leadership development and sharing; succession planning; measures; analysis of results; and improvement efforts.

Strengths:

- ✓ Several interview groups and committees on campus indicated that data is used to make decisions in areas such as the library, bookstore, advisory committee, continuing education, and student services. The presence of an institutional research position assists areas in this process.
- ✓ Various mechanisms are in place for communication within campuses such as the Campus Council, advisory committees, and the College Senate, which is based on the shared governance model.
- ✓ All employees are invited into AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Project) leadership and teams. Evidence was presented that employees are participating through V7 initiatives.
- ✓ The All-College Day is a respected and beneficial event for many employees. Multiple interview groups believed that the day enhances the one college-one voice concept.
- ✓ The newly-formed Quality Council brings together strategic planning and the AQIP process. This council has the potential to impact the college in a positive way.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ Interviewees expressed a desire to have more communication about what other groups, campuses and committees of the college are accomplishing. Consider placing more emphasis on an online repository or newsletter. Communicating internally about successes is as important as external marketing. Consider processes that allow advisory committees from campuses work together. Communication to the adjunct instructors is also important.
- ✓ Multiple interviewee groups expressed concern regarding recent tornado siren confusion. Ensure that the comprehensive emergency plan

information reaches all parts of the college. Consider holding mock safety events.

- ✓ The college catalog and other documents list NICC's (Northeast Iowa Community College) vision and goals; however, the Iowa Code points of law are only included in the Board Policy manual. It would be important to illustrate how these points of law fit into the college's overall mission.
- ✓ The Board Policy manual states that policies are updated regularly; however, many policies do not show a date of adoption or last revision. Dating the policies is an important recordkeeping process.
- ✓ The nondiscrimination statement is not evident in board policy at this time; however, it was noted that it had a second reading at the board recently.
- ✓ Multiple interview groups stated that they did not know about college's V7 process and how it aligns with the strategic plan. Other interview groups stated that hopes are being pinned upon this process working. Communication and involvement with faculty, staff, and administration in this process is imperative for success.
- ✓ Continue strengthening collaboration between career and technical education and continuing education programming. Current examples of collaboration include the CNA program and the development of an Industrial Maintenance program.
- ✓ Multiple interview groups expressed a lack of clarity of communication regarding the recent passage of the bond issue. Questions were expressed regarding the timeline of projects and the extent of projects. Staff expressed that if they have an understanding of this, it might also assist in the community's understanding.
- ✓ Interviewees reported that they previously had a greater voice on issues and are concerned that the new college senate has or will lessen their input. Consider soliciting advice from all areas of the college.

6. SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS

Category six addresses the support processes that help provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines processes and systems related to: student support; administrative support, identification of needs; contribution to student learning and accomplishing other distinctive objectives; day-to-day operations; use of data; measures; analysis of results; and improvement efforts.

Strengths:

- ✓ Interviewees indicated the importance and impact the TRiO grant provides to student learning, student's self-esteem, and overall support of the student's success while at NICC (Northeast Iowa Community College).
- ✓ Interviewees stated the XPRESS Portal provides information to students and staff on an on-going basis. Students and staff stay abreast of what is happening with the college through this method. Communication between faculty and students is enhanced because of XPRESS.
- ✓ Interviewees indicated an appreciation that the student to faculty ratio is low—8:1.
- ✓ Interviewees indicated the Learning Center is an asset to successful learning. The Learning Center has individual tutoring and specialized tutors.
- ✓ Interviewees stated the pride the college and its employees take in providing an eye-appealing campus through beautification efforts both provided through employee volunteer efforts and grant funding.
- ✓ Interviewees appreciated the replacement of technology every three years for academic areas and four years for all other areas.
- ✓ GED graduates may take one, three-hour college credit class tuition free. At the Calmar campus, GED students are provided free lunch.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ Peosta campus interviewees expressed a desire to have an avenue provided for students to be introduced to and engaged in conversation with administration.
- ✓ Consider providing updates to all levels of employees to ensure that all employees understand the current initiatives. Those employees can then play an even larger role in the support of initiatives.

- ✓ Review financial/budgeting processes to make sure that all employees understand that emergency funding needs have an established mechanism in which to be addressed. Interview groups expressed that concern that the new AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Project) process and V7 process may not work for all needs.
- ✓ Continue working to build endowment and potential donors to help with external funding.

7. MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

Category seven examines how the organization collects, analyzes, and uses information to manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines processes and systems related to: collection, storage, management, and use of information and data at the institutional and department/unit levels; institutional measures of effectiveness; information and data alignment with institutional needs and directions; comparative information and data; analysis of information and data; effectiveness of information system and processes; measures; analysis of results; and improvement efforts.

Strengths:

- ✓ NICC (Northeast Iowa Community College) utilizes data driven budget requests for equipment and software needs. The process provides for a visionary approach for allocation of resources to be communicated. Interviewees expressed that the process is clear, fair, and fits the strategic plan.
- ✓ NICC surveyed students in 2006 and 2008 utilizing the Community College Survey of Student Engagement to gain insight into a variety of student issues.
- ✓ The college is taking strategic action to make this category an emphasis. An example is the hiring of the Institution Research director, utilization of NCCBP, and the Clarus study.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ While NICC collects a variety of data about the college and students, it was not clear how the information is being used for continuous improvement. Professional development for employees on how to utilize the data collected is needed. Additionally, employees need to understand the systematic approach which will allow for a user friendly process that is available to employees at all times.
- ✓ Continue the process to set targets so that successes can be measured.

8. PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Category eight examines the planning processes and how strategies and action plans are helping achieve the mission and vision. It examines processes and systems related to: institutional vision; planning; strategies and action plans; coordination and alignment of strategies and action plans; measures and performance projections; resource needs; faculty, staff, and administrator capabilities; measures; analysis of performance projections and results; improvement efforts.

Strengths:

- ✓ Interviewees indicated that it is hoped that V7 will provide an increased awareness to the College's Strategic Plan and AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Project). Interviewees indicated that it is hoped that V7 will provide an avenue for on-going attention to planning and continuous improvement.
- ✓ Interviewees stated the addition of the Institutional Research and Grant Writer positions have aided in providing expanded resources (i.e., data, additional funding) needed for planning.
- ✓ Interviewees indicated the college administration listens to recommendations made through partnerships and advisory members for purposes of improving the overall college and program efforts. Examples of this include changes in curriculum, addressing technology needs, and passage of the bond issue.
- ✓ The maturing use of the AQIP process is leading to data-driven prioritization. (Examples are program viability decisions, funding for driver's education vehicles, library resource decision-making, and CLARUS results.)
- ✓ The college is in the process of developing a technology plan for the entire district.
- ✓ A regional transit van/bus is available for student and staff transportation between the Dubuque Center for Education/ Town Clock Center and the Peosta campus for \$1 each way.
- ✓ NICC recently passed a \$35 million bond issue for new buildings and renovation of several existing buildings.
- ✓ The student services department has participated in the Lean process to ensure efficiency. The department has completed 38 out of 65 processes. Other departments are considering utilizing the Lean process as well.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ Consider broadening the representation of support staff on V7 and College Senate while keeping in mind the size of the overall committee. Consider creating standing representations so that there will always be equitable representation on the committees.
- ✓ Consider expanding the continuous improvement processes to include current and new partnerships such as high schools, businesses, agencies, and committees.
- ✓ Consider clarifying to stakeholders (both internal and external) how CCSSE and NCCBP results are being used to make decisions for improvement.
- ✓ Continue to stress how AQIP (Academic Quality Improvement Project) and its processes are benefiting the noncredit and student services departments of the college.

9. BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Category Nine examines the organization's relationships—current and potential—to analyze how they contribute to accomplishing the mission. It examines processes and systems related to: identification of key internal and external collaborative relationships; alignment of key collaborative relationships; relationships creation, prioritization, and building; needs identification; internal relationships.

Strengths:

- ✓ Multiple interview groups indicated that partnerships and relationships with external organizations are strong. Examples include career and technical advisory boards, Peosta Community Center, HOPE (Health Occupations in Education), Greater Dubuque Development Corporation, Entrepreneurial Cosmetology with Capri, and public library boards.
- ✓ Advisory Boards and the Executive Advisory Board provide strong ties to community needs and pass information to community. Multiple interview groups expressed that this relationship assisted with the second attempt at the Bond passage, which showed strong community support (64%).
- ✓ NICC has developed and sustained key collaborative partnerships with organizations such as the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS) and Northeast Iowa Dairy Center. The working dairy exhibits a partnership with the foundation. The foundation owns the building and the cows and allows student to access this for learning.
- ✓ Interviewees reported working with business partners on programming issues to meet local needs such as the Career Readiness Certificate, Gas Operations Technician, Manchester school work on welding Industrial Maintenance, and Career Ladders in Cresco.
- ✓ Interviewees are proud of relationships with business community, and the noncredit staff is well-known in the area for meeting and addressing community needs. Interview groups stated that NICC is one of the largest 260E, F, and G providers for its size.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- ✓ Consider strengthening efforts to market the community college successes in the population center of Dubuque. Interviewees expressed that this is a resource not fully tapped. Seamless transitions that have been initiated through the Downtown centers can provide models.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

In review of the college faculty load files, it was determined that both arts and sciences as well as career and technical faculty members are exceeding the teaching loads as required by Iowa Code. The college should examine their policies and procedures in order to assure that all faculty members comply with the teaching loads as specified in Iowa Code.

The State Accreditation Team recommends continued accreditation for Northeast Iowa Community College District. A State Interim Accreditation visit will be held to coincide with the District's next Higher Learning Commission visit in 2012 in four years.